



Nutri-Facts Weight Management



Introduction

Almost 2/3 of the adults in the United States are overweight or obese, a condition that substantially raises their risk of morbidity from hypertension, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea and respiratory problems, and endometrial, breast, prostate, and colon cancers. Higher body weights are also associated with increases in the total number of deaths. Obese individuals may suffer from social stigmatization and discrimination. As the second leading cause of preventable death in the United States today, overweight and obesity pose a major public health challenge. Overweight and obesity frequently result from an energy imbalance, resulting from excess calorie intake and physical inactivity.

Calorie Consumption

In America, a changing environment has broadened food options and eating habits. Grocery stores stock their shelves with a greater selection of products. Pre-packaged foods, fast food restaurants, and soft drinks are also more accessible. While such foods are fast and convenient they tend to be high in fat, sugar, and calories. Choosing these types of foods can contribute to an excessive calorie intake. Some foods are marketed as low fat, or fat-free may contain more calories from sugars than the fat containing food they are designed to replace.

Daily calorie consumption has increased even as physical activity has decreased. People may be consuming larger portion sizes as well as increasing between-meal snacks. If the body does not burn off the extra calories consumed from larger portions, fast food, or soft drinks, weight gain can occur.

Follow these tips for healthy weight loss:

1. **A gradual weight loss of 1-2 pounds a week, allows for weight loss without irritability, fatigue, and weakness.** Creating a daily deficit of 500 calories is the most efficient way to create long-term weight loss. This can be done by reducing daily caloric intake by 500 calories, increasing physical activity by 500 calories, or by combining physical activity and caloric intake to create a 500-calorie deficit.
2. **Choose a variety of foods from all of the food groups in the Food Guide Pyramid.** The Food Guide Pyramid recommends 6-11 servings of bread, rice, and pasta; 3-5 servings of vegetables; 2-4 servings of fruit; 2-3 servings of dairy; 2-3 servings of meats, beans, eggs, fish and nuts; and fats, sweets, and oils use sparingly. Remember, never cut calories too low. This can slow metabolism and make it difficult to consume the necessary nutrients for performance and health.

3. **Don't skip meals.** Food intake at regular intervals, three or more times a day, is necessary to fuel the body. Also, waiting until you're "starved" to eat can lead to binge eating.
4. **Eat smaller food portions.** Decreasing your portion sizes will help cut caloric intake.
5. **Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration.** In addition to water, plain ice tea and caffeine-free, artificially sweetened drinks can also help reduce daily caloric intake and help to keep you hydrated.
6. **Eat slowly.** It takes time for the body to adjust to the food eaten and to send the feeling of fullness signal to the brain. Eating slowly helps prevent overeating by allowing time for this signal to take effect.
7. **Calories from all the food and drink you swallow add up.** Some foods provide more calories than others. Foods that are high in fat generally are higher in calories. Choosing low-fat foods can aid in weight loss by reducing total caloric intake.
8. **Don't cut out all fat items.** Many feel that fat intake is the culprit to unwanted weight gain. Although excess fat intake leads to weight gain, a good amount of "healthy" fat is necessary to maintain good health and performance such as olive oil, fish oil, nuts, seeds and guacamole.
9. **Eat bigger meals earlier in the day, when activity is greatest, and smaller meals in the evening.** Eat meals and snacks throughout the day to maintain blood glucose and energy levels. During the evening, activity is usually minimal. As a result, a large meal will more likely be stored as fat. A moderate-size evening meal will help replace glycogen stores.
10. **Eat your favorite foods regularly.** If you deny yourself your favorite high-fat foods, you are more likely to crave them and finally binge. Occasionally eating these foods can reduce cravings and binges. Every food is okay in moderation.

What about Fad Diets?

Fad diets are not the best way to lose weight and keep it off. Fad diets often promise quick weight loss or tell you to cut certain foods out of your diet. You may lose weight at first on one of these diets. But diets that strictly limit calories or food choices are hard to follow. Most people quickly get tired of them and regain any lost weight. Fad diets may be unhealthy because they may not provide all of the nutrients your body needs. Also, losing weight at a very rapid rate (more than 3 pounds a week after the first couple weeks) may increase your risk for developing gallstones (clusters of solid material in the gallbladder that can be painful).

Remember, the safest and most effective way to lose weight is to reduce calories and increase physical activity. It is best to consult with your personal physician or health care professional for advice to meet your needs.

For more information on this and other health and wellness topics, visit Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) at <http://www.nko.navy.mil> or the Navy Environmental Health Center (NEHC) at <http://www-nehc.med.navy.mil/hp>.